

## Entrepreneurship Education versus Sustainable Economic Development in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Africa

**Mani Ahmed**

**Yahaya Aliyu Saidu**

*Department of Education,  
Umaru Musa Yar'adua University, Katsina-Nigeria*

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### **Abstract**

*Entrepreneurship education constitutes a vital curriculum instrument which could be employed in addressing issues and problems which lead to Economic Development in Africa. As most of our tertiary education grandaunts currently appear to be marginalized in the scheme of socio economic and developmental endeavours in this continent, entrepreneurial skills germane for generating self-employment could be explored as a very good alternative to wage employment. This line of thought could go a long way, not only in arresting the soaring unemployment rate in the Africa but could also contribute in enabling African countries overcome or solve a number of problems or issues which are at stake in the course of our march towards sustainable development. This paper does claim to be conclusive but presents important issues for careful reflection, to provoke discussion on the discourses on the relevancy of entrepreneurship education to economic development of Africa. The paper is not empirical but it is located in sound knowledge and careful observation within African economic development in a global world as viewed by the writer. The paper raises issues around entrepreneurship education and economic development in Africa. Thus it has examined the concept of entrepreneurship education and its relationship economic development particularly in this age of globalization in Africa. It equally analyses the entrepreneurship role in contending Socio-economic development in African countries and made some recommendation on how to utilise this variable to make African Educational system achieve its Socio-economic aims and objectives and make African Countries grate in the nearest future. Methodically, the paper is a product of careful observation and reflections on direct participation in Higher education production and conclusion from studies in the fields of entrepreneurship education and human values in Africa.*

### **1. Introduction**

The challenges confronting Africa in the task of achieving the developmental goals presented in the foregoing strategic socio-economic plans Like MDGs bear seriously on the problem of implementing all the objectives intrinsic in them so that Africa could be portrayed as being on the verge or threshold of attaining sustainable development in all its ramifications. For education, programmes to be employed as fundamental instruments in achieving the foregoing developmental goals, they must necessarily be efficient. In particular, if these programmes are to serve as vital equipments for capitalizing on the human resources and capacity-building assets needed for achieving the variegated objectives and goals, we need a re-orientation. We require educational programmes that have to be tailored at recreating the necessary socioeconomic and political values considered critical to the growth and consolidation of the continent's democracy. Umar,(2008) recounted these values thus: honesty, transparency, cooperation and the rule of law, respect for the dignity of

labour, discipline, industry, self confidence and moral courage. Umar endorses that these values are at the root in the tasks involved in the empowerment of individuals and enabling the generality of the people in a given populace in recognizing the vitality of education as a necessary foundation for life-long learning and human development on which an individual can build systematically further levels and types of education and training.

It has, therefore, become vital that new courses and programmes be deliberately introduced into our various schools' curriculum in order to revitalize them with a view to educating and or reeducating the country's womenfolk. It is submitted here that the foregoing values and the empowerment structures needed for overcoming our gender issues and problems for sustainable development in this 21<sup>st</sup> century must necessarily be compatible with the essence of human capacity-building assets and skills required in the display of organizational and management practices needed for developing Nigeria's natural resources and managing the natural environment in a most productive manner. Thus, one of such programmes and or courses which could be explored and employed in grooming and producing human resources characterized by a number of the aforementioned values and skills and who could constitute the pillars for achieving the goals of economic development in Africa for sustainable development is entrepreneurship education.

Entrepreneurship education, according to Ozoro (2003), is expected to develop in the recipients the needed skills for self-reliance and easy adaptation in the world of work, thus producing not job seekers but job creators and employers of labour. Ozoro submits that this type of education emphasizes the dignity of labour, encourages diligence, proper means of gaining prosperity and of solving economic problems; it stimulates and encourages creativity, equips the school leaver with skills for earning a living. However, Akanbi (2002) cautions that entrepreneurship education should be seen as a short term enterprise. She stresses that it has to be given on the perspective that the recipient will benefit from it and use it to become self-employed and self reliant apart from being productive in work and human affairs.

The place of entrepreneurship programmes in the task of enabling our populace, particularly our tertiary education graduates, achieve the goals and objectives of African economic development is not merely an issue of classroom delivery of subject matter or content alone; it also embraces and places a good degree of premium on the employment of requisite methods and knowledge structures including a display of a number of skills for achieving the objectives and goals established in African economic development. These skills, according to Akanbi (2002), are designed to enable Nigeria, among others, tackle her socio-economic issues and problems, particularly in terms of enabling our graduates gain awareness and embrace a number of developmental assets that are rooted in the following: (a) acquisition of human resources and capacity-building skills ;(b)Promotion of human dignity and equality (c) promotion of peace, democracy and democratic governance; (d) Promotion of environmental stability and sustainability; (e) technological development and the necessary skills' acquisition; (f) natural resources management;(g) infrastructural development; (h)public –private partnership orientation;(i) sustainable poverty reduction;(j) employment creation and generation; (k) wealth creation; and (l) value-orientation and or re-orientation.

## **2. Entrepreneurship Education examined vis-à-vis the challenges of Socio-economic Issues and Problems in the task of Sustainable Development in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Africa.**

Edomareniye (2010) reflects that entrepreneurship education can be viewed as the aspect of education and learning that can create in the learner a kind of behavior that emphasizes initiative-taking, the organization and re-organization of social and economic mechanisms and situations to practical account, and the acceptance of risk or failure. As a process of creating incremental wealth, entrepreneurship education helps the entrepreneur to bridge the gap between science and

the market place by creating new enterprises and bringing new products and services to the market (Hisrich and Peters, 2007). These entrepreneurial activities significantly affect the economy of any nation by building the economic base and providing jobs for all cadres of people (Edomareniye, 2010). African generally has reference for an utilitarian traditional education, yet our tradition relies more on practical service than on mental cultivation.

Ekanam (2003) elaborates further that entrepreneurship education provides the process by which new organization can emerge into existence and therefore constitutes a human creative act that builds something of value from practically nothing. He also conceptualizes entrepreneurship education as the education that initiates into an individual the capacity for organizing, operating and assuming risks for a business venture. It is dynamic, risk-taking, creative and growth oriented behavior which involves the use of a variety of resources to create wealth. Ovakomo (2008) opined that entrepreneurship education involves the identification of general characteristics of entrepreneurs and how the potential entrepreneur can be trained in management for long-term/long time survival of effective performance; it, therefore, becomes imperative, according to these scholars, that entrepreneurship education should be integrated into the curriculum of all institutions of learning to equip all classes of students irrespective of gender differences and divergences with relevant skills, acute business knowledge, self-confidence and other attributes necessary for self-reliance and national survival.

Thus entrepreneurship education, among other functions, is designed to enable individuals overcome and counter all forms of challenges and issues which derive from gender stereo-typing, neglect and discrimination; it cuts across and constitutes an antidote for barriers militating against human development and advancement. It endorses the emergence of bold ventures that transcend tribal sentiments, ethnic affiliations and religious groupings. Entrepreneurship education is asking the individual, whether a male or a female, the following questions amongst others: (a) what is your mind-set? (b) are you preparing to go the extra mile to seek the "golden fleece"? (c) can you work very hard in spite of your circumstances? (d) are you narrow –minded or parochialistic in your life- style? (e) are you prepared to cultivate the spirit of excellence? (f) are you ingenious and diligent in your sentiments?

The issues involved in the foregoing reflections cut across gender affiliations, and therefore need to be capitalized upon so that the individual could make success of entrepreneurship education. The criteria re-counted above do not require heavy investment or heavy capital outlays. The individual, male or female, could start from almost nothing; he or she only requires the strong will, the ingenuity and iron-character to make things happen socio-economically. These lines of thinking could assist our nations to overcome the problems and issues which bear on economic development and therefore contribute enormously in the tasks intrinsic in achieving African's developmental goals for sustainability as contained in Nigerian vision 2020.

However, a number of key issues must necessarily be put in place for enhancing entrepreneurship education, particularly if it is to be explored and employed for addressing socio-economic problems for the attainment of sustainable development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Africa. The following criteria are important:

- (a) There is need for the establishment of the necessary framework for entrepreneurship education to thrive and become sustained
- (b) Entrepreneurship education has to be integrated within the framework of our national curriculum from the grassroots level to the tertiary level.
- (c) Government has to institute frameworks for translating policy commitments into concrete resources and tangibles.
- (d) We need to develop schemes for determining adequate indicators and mechanisms for monitoring progress in the entrepreneurship education process.
- (e) There is a need for the government to establish entrepreneurship pilot schools which are

designed to cater for the “workmanship- interests” of students and learners in spite of gender differences.

- (f) There is a need for the government to raise awareness and dissemination of genuine practices in entrepreneurship programmes; these awareness programmes and campaigns should be geared at “waging war” against gender discrimination and gender stereotyping.
- (g) There is a need for instituting programmes and educational processes which are designed to favour links between schools and businesses including business consortiums.
- (h) There is need also in providing specific training to school teachers and making teaching materials and resources available; these training programmes have to capitalize on exposing these teachers to teacher-management designs in the context of organizational set-ups and or requirements
- (i) Government has to institute modalistic and processes for stimulating cultural changes that will help to define, explain and promote entrepreneurship education; the modalities and processes must be geared at cutting across gender differences and at the same time militating against gender differences and gender stereotyping.
- (j) Government should endeavour to build achievement motivation into teaching and learning situations in order to bridge gender inequality gap, and counter gender discrimination and gender stereotyping as done in many European countries (Edomareniye, 2010).

### **3. Contending with 21<sup>st</sup> Century Socio-Economic development Challenges through Entrepreneurship Curriculum Programmes In African's Schools' system.**

In order to contend with the soaring unemployment crisis, which cuts across gender difference, in this continent, African leaders has to consider instituting and establishing support programmes that are rooted in entrepreneurship programmes in all educational institutions. The emphasis in such programmes has to be tailored at boosting self reliance amongst all cadres of students and learners. Government has to encourage academic institutions to design programmes for generating entrepreneurship spirit amongst all students. The aim is to equip these students, on graduation, with skills capable of making them entrepreneurs rather than job seekers, Nwankwo (2010) advances that entrepreneurs are marked by their exceptional drive to achieve; this exceptional drive, according to him, is close to the four pillars of education; these include: (a) learning to know; (b) learning to do; (c) learning to live together; and (d) learning to be. He expatiates, that entrepreneurship education constitutes an integral part of the general education designed to equip all students with entrepreneurial skills that will make them self-reliant, self-employed, creative and innovative.

Adamu (2005) reflects that the operational definition of entrepreneurship education is that part of education that enables a person to develop the willingness and ability to explore and exploit investment opportunities, establish and manage a successful business enterprise. He argues that since entrepreneurship education is an integral part of the general education, it is necessary to endorse that some measures need to be adopted in the African schools' system if it must be relevant to the local needs and aspirations of young persons.

The current emphasis on entrepreneurship education amongst Nigeria academics suggests that Nigerian education system, other African countries inclusive, needs some kind revision or modification so as to render it more responsive in meeting our local needs and demands. In this directive, our education could be made more relevant through the infusion of curriculum programmes in the already established education system of each country. Nwankwo (2010) suggests that the relevance of education is better judged from its propensity to respond to the needs and aspirations of its users and operators. If entrepreneurship education is to be capitalized upon in achieving the objectives and goals of sustainable development in any country, particularly

in addressing the problems and issues which impinge on economic development, there must be quality teachers who can develop in all cadres of learners, children and students critical and creative thinking patterns in the context of being responsive to our local needs and demands.

Thus the goal of entrepreneurship education in Africa cannot be achieved in the absence of an intelligent, well- educated and professionally qualified teachers who must be dedicated to service of humanity. These teachers should be able to inspire all cadres of learners as to what it takes to be critical and creative. They have to lure students into recognizing that without their ability to think critically and creatively, the possibility of becoming good and successful entrepreneurs might be ruled out. These teachers must necessarily be involved in constant evaluation of curriculum programmes in entrepreneurship education. Through this device, irrelevant materials could be dropped and the entire process made more responsive to the needs and aspirations of the society. These teachers have to stress emphasis on the development and acquisition of skills and knowledge structures useful to our local environments. They also have to be engaged in constant stock taking by weighing any achievements recorded through entrepreneurship education against failures encountered; this could enable them to change or modify any existing practices. On the whole, these teachers must necessarily be committed to the advancement of the core areas of entrepreneurship education which, according to Edomareniye (2010:111), include:

- (a) Endorsement and development of such personal qualities as creativity, spirit of initiative, critical thinking, hard-work, perseverance and diligence amongst all cadres of learners;
- (b) Emphasizing amongst members of society, the need for early contact with the world of business and knowledge and the role of entrepreneurs;
- (c) Creating the awareness amongst all cadres of learners to visualize self-employment as a career option;
- (d) Training and educating individuals to endorse the philosophy of learning by doing; and
- (e) Training in business ideas.

#### **4. Overcoming African Socio-Economic Problems for Sustainable Development in 21<sup>st</sup> Century through Entrepreneurship Education**

This exposition advances that entrepreneurship education provides social programmes for exploring ways of integrating educational graduates into the labour force including the reduction of discrimination against Gender issues in our financial markets. Entrepreneurship education endorses the need for a self-employed people through the acquisition of the habits, attitudes and skills as means of surviving in the face of the global economic recession. Gender issues raised in the context of entrepreneurship education have become subject of current discussion in most international conferences (Edomareniye, 2010). Derivable benefits by our girls and womenfolk from embracing entrepreneurship education include the following assets (a) acquisition of skills in entrepreneurship; (b) promotion of the zeal to become enterprising and explore the benefits there from; (c) promotion and enhancement of their levels of accountability.

The Nigerian Government took a giant step to promote the concept of vocationalism by stating the objectives of vocational-technical education in her National Policy on Education (1981, Revised) as follows:

- (a) to provide trained manpower in applied science, technology and commerce particularly at sub-professional grades;
- (b) to provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development;
- (c) to provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man;

- (d) to give an introduction to professional studies in engineering and other technologies;
- (e) to give training and impart the necessary skills leading to the production of craftsmen, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-reliant; and
- (f) to enable our young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology.

These objectives were stated 24 years ago to redeem the bias against vocational-technical education. To this day, even though more vocational-technical institutions have been established across the nation as compared with the fewer numbers of institutions in 1981, the initial bias against, and the disdain for vocational technical education is still evident. Students in polytechnics and technical institutions reflect this bias against vocational-technical education in the enrolment response across the nation.

A serious and positive embrace of entrepreneurship education by our educational system could open students eyes, in respective of Gender differences to the assets intrinsic in operating enterprises of needed capacity, based on their investment limits and or capacities. Ughamadu (2010) reflects that, with sound research and information disposal and economic analysis, our graduates entrepreneurs could avail themselves of the possibilities of taking calculated risks, and which could also result into huge success (Nwakwo, 2010; Edomareniye, 2010). This cadre of people could undertake the planning and execution of interesting businesses that are of financial, marketing and operational relevance in Africa's quest for sustainable development in this present Global Village. Ughamadu (2010) further advances that as it is functional in the free enterprise system, risks and rewards as operational processes are clearly defined: This development could become instrumental to exposing our graduate entrepreneurs to a number of basic economics concepts such as 'savings', 'interests', 'supply and demand.' Thus our prospective graduates-entrepreneurs could learn to appreciate the possibilities of varieties in finance, retail, service and technology.

The commitment of our educational system to the "entrepreneurial spirit" could enable its graduates advance strategies that are conducive to promoting a variety of enterprises in a given socioeconomic environment. These strategies could involve: (i) coping with the challenges involved in adopting a "survivalist formula" in the community service, and the overall economic development strategy; (ii) the adoption of practices in a given enterprise or organization, responsibly and professionally as required in legal ethics in an environment; (iii) employing the services of consultants and experts to achieve desired goals and objectives when these services are needed; (iv) exposure of their businesses or enterprises to the exigencies of the times and endeavouring to adopt the socioeconomic trends of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In the sphere of accountability, our prospective graduate's entrepreneurs could be forced to endeavour to keep proper and accurate accounting system and recording procedures which could also guide them on improvement and assessment of results including the viability of their establishments. These graduates could also cultivate the principle of employing people according to their levels of impact, input and productivity with respect to their enterprises and establishments, and could also learn to reward these employees accordingly and appropriately. Above all, these graduate's entrepreneurs could begin to produce responsible and capable successors who could also establish and manage their own prospective business consortiums and endeavours.

A reappraisal of this education for financial viability will involve our vocational-technical colleges being attached with business and industrial organization for practical training of students. Through this attachment, industries and business corporations can subsidize vocational-technical education.

In addition, employers and governments at the state and federal levels should encourage on-the-job- training of workers in public and private sectors. Attachment of middle level technicians to businesses and industries for upgrading of skills can help diversify vocational-technical training at



minimal costs to government.

Also, individual efforts in technological production should be encouraged. For example, about two decades ago, a man built a 'car' that was powered by a generator. Another Nigerian in the early 1980s, exhibited a locally made 'car' at a National Trade Fair in Lagos. Some Nigerians could still remember that the late Professor Awojobi invented a car. Nigerian federal government needs to encourage young potentials who are contributing their impact technologically to develop our society and give them incentives for their talents.

## **5. Conclusion**

In this exposition, the vitality of entrepreneur education in terms of addressing African Economic development in the task of achieving sustainable development in 21<sup>st</sup> century Africa, has been highlighted. In line with the reflections advanced in this presentation, Ughamadu (2010) submits that in this era where the world has become a global village, where information and communication technological breakthroughs have broken the geographical barriers, formatting the nation's curriculum development designs towards entrepreneurship education is most desirable at this point in time. Our various governments, educational planners and curriculum developers need to recognize and live up to these challenges if we are to explore and employ entrepreneurship education in addressing gender issues and problems in the task of creating the necessary base for sustainable development in 21<sup>st</sup> century Africa.

African leaders need to create a new approach for the concept of vocational education and its purpose to the society. This is because entrepreneur education, for some decades now has been perceived to mean the education for the mentally retarded, physically handicapped and socially maladjusted students. We are at the beginning of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It is regrettable that many African leaders still believe that vocational education is for students with low intelligence and dropouts from formal school system despite the fact its occupational content offers the trainees the opportunity to acquire skills, attitude and knowledge which are needed for the technological growth of our nation.

## **6. Recommendations**

In order to address the problem of Socio-economic development in Africa, the use of vocational inventories has become a necessity; this design could assist educational graduates including the general public to become more aware about their interests, aptitudes and "strong-points" in occupational choices so as to make appropriate career decisions.

All our teachers should be re-trained or trained towards embracing entrepreneurship education. These teachers could create the necessary basis for knowledge impartation amongst all cadres of learners.

Curriculum planning and development in our various education levels should be tailored, modified and manage to embrace entrepreneurship education.

Primary and secondary school teachers should be more involved in the orientation of students towards the relevance of entrepreneur education to their communities and they should be constantly informed of the nations manpower needs: The administrators in the schools should ensure that qualified and competent teachers are employed to teach pre-vocational and vocational courses as recommended in our National Policy on Education.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) courses should be grafted and taught in all cadres of our educational trainings so that our young graduates could grow with modern educational facilities provided by computers, internet, handset and other electronic discoveries and methods of information dissemination.

All vocational institutions in Africa should be oriented to explore and covet the assets intrinsic in the modern acquisition of skills provided in entrepreneurship education.

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